

'As for me,' bawled out Mrs. Gardiner, 'I'm swarming. And Miss Sharp is wus than I am.'

'The more's the pity,' said the old gentleman, 'we shall have no apples and pears.'

'No, not to signify. How's your peaches?'

'Why, they set kindly enough ma'am, but they all dropped off in the last frosty nights.'

'Ah, it ain't the frost,' roared Mrs. G., 'you have got down to the gravel; I know you have, you look so rusty and scrubby.'

'I wish you good morning, ma'am,' said the little old bachelor, turning very red in the face, and making rather a precipitate retreat; as who wouldn't, thus attacked at once in his person and his peach trees?

'To be sure, he was dreadful unproductive,' the widow said, 'but a good sort of body, and ten times pleasanter than the next door neighbor at number ten, who would keep coming over her wall, till she cut off his pumpkin.'

She now led me round the house to 'her back,' where she showed me her grass-plot, wishing she was greener, and asking if she ought not to have a roll. She next led me off to her vegetables, halting at last at her peas, some few rows of Blue Prussians, which she had probably obtained from Waterloo, they were so long in coming up.

'Back'ard, ain't I?'

'Yes, rather.'

'Wery, but Miss Sharp is back'arder than me; she's hardly out of the ground yet, and please God, in another fortnight I shall want sticking.'

There was something so irresistibly comic in the last equivoque, that I was forced to slur over a laugh as a sneeze, and then continued to ask her if she had no assistance in her labors.

'What, a gardener? never! I did once have a daily jobber, and he jobbed away all my dahlias; I declare I could have cried. But's very hard to think your a valuable bulb, and when summer comes you're nothing but a stick and label.'

'Very provoking, indeed.'

'Talk of transplanting; they do nothing else but transplant you from one house to another, till you don't know where you are. There was I, thinking I was safe and sound in my own bed, and all the while I was in Mr. Jones's. It is scandalous.'